



Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

ICSAA

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
Strategic Planning Meeting
October 2, 2020
5:30 – 7:30 PM
Virtual Meeting via Google Meet
Due to Coronavirus (COVID 19) Pandemic

Minutes

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ahmadu Baba-Singhri at 5:45 pm

Present

Ahmadu Baba-Singhri, Lynn Sutton, Monica Mead

Absent

Kenneth Morris, Rosalind Peebles-Fox, San Wong, ex-officio

Staff

Kim Cheeks, Monica Stone

Welcome and roll call

Guests

Tina Shaw, Iowa Dept. of Human Rights, CAS Division
Joyce Bruce, Community Partners Connecting Children
Warren Dukes, Amerigroup
Jeanette Thomas, Iowa Dept. of Education

Commissioners' brainstorm

Chair Baba-Singhri – commission evaluate where we are, and create a road map of where we want to go, identify objectives and develop an action plan
Black people are behind in every area, and tend to be high in statistics, the commission is going to look at how to change the status of Blacks in the state. He thought it would be a good idea to brainstorm, and come up with key objectives to change the status.
With the two commissioners present, work on next 2-3 years (short term) plan. Stated we are a human rights organization – we (Blacks) have a right to succeed.

Opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Sutton – Dubuque

1. Incarceration of African Americans – in Dubuque marijuana is a major issue, go in with minor offenses, other offenses added to extend sentences, Eg. African American woman went into a store with \$100 bill and when she tried to pay for her groceries, store thought was counterfeit. Found it wasn't, they arrested her anyway, she ended up incarcerated for 4 months, lost her job, and they claimed she had other charges. Seems to be others are detained for longer periods, and are provoked while in jail.
2. Education – are all students having the same opportunities, such as tutoring, etc.
3. Change ordinances
4. Health
5. Economy – how to get connected to right job

Commissioner Monica Mead – Des Moines

1. Holding police officers accountable for police brutality, not being able to hold positions if they are wrong, if used excessive force should be held accountable, officers abusing authority
2. Steps to influence policy for City of police officers:
 - a. complaint policy – for community members against police, where a person can go to police department and file complaint, then reviewed by internal affairs

Monica Stone

- Suggested the commission could draft an ideal (model) policy for cities to adopt and present to cities to make system change. In addition, how to improve the economy/disparities/jobs.

Commissioner Sutton

Income:

- people living paycheck to paycheck
- how to get them to the one job to sustain the family

Barriers:

- affordable daycare
- transportation to available jobs
- challenges – substance abuse: alcohol, marijuana

Ways to address:

- policy change
- change hearts – address drug use

Drug use:

- employment – goal improve economic standing
- responsibility of behaviors

Ways to address:

- town halls / community forums

- research jobs impaired by drug use

Barriers:

- Difficult because may impair person from doing their job Eg. machine operators
- liability of employers for persons under the influence
- discourage behavior
- ability to access substance abuse rehabilitation programs

Jeanette Thomas, guest:

- intervention / prevention
- drug courts
- raise awareness

Monica Stone

- ODCP / IDPH drug courts – invite to come speak to commission, about what programs are available, what may need to be modified, along with organizations working on this issue
- suggested Janice Edmunds-Wells, retired IDPH – excellent resource for programs

Warren Dukes, guest:

- substance abuse issue – suggested holding resource fairs, see what exists, Iowa Total Care, need to pool resources and identify what's out there

Jeanette Thomas:

- do an equity audit, what's available around the state, like minded resources, project for an intern

Chair Baba-Singhri

- reminded guests to send information to Kim Cheeks for collaboration opportunities

Education equity

- hold an education fair – for black students
- encourage courses that will benefit them in terms of employment
- strategically choose degree programs
- determine weaknesses

Barriers:

- Access
- Tools needed, Eg. books, funding
- Who is at the table when policies are made

Identified from discussion the following priority areas:

1. Criminal Justice
2. Education
3. Economy

A. Criminal Justice:

1. meet with council members, mayor
2. law enforcement use of excessive force
3. look at current research being done
4. research practices/ review current policies
5. collaborate with NAACP – current programs
6. what can commission do to reduce contact – look at existing programs and research

B. Education or lack of:

1. what are consequences of actions,
2. social & racial equity,
3. graduation rates,
4. college enrollment rates – *civic education*,

C. Economic/Employment:

1. institutional bias or discrimination in hiring/firing
2. racial profiling
3. contact EEOC for assistance in addressing
4. Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Next steps:

1. Assign 2 commissioners per issue – to review data and develop action steps before next meeting Nov. 6.
2. Establish short term goals and action steps:

Tina Shaw – data suggestions in the Chat box

https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm
https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_over.htm#available

Meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cheeks

Kim Cheeks
Recorder